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**GOVERNOR JAMES KNOX POLK
PAPERS
1839-1841**

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers of the gubernatorial administration of James Knox Polk (1795-1849) reflect the political turmoil evident in the State of Tennessee during the mid-to-late 1830's. This political battle was between the Whig Party, which had taken control of the State House in 1834, and the Jacksonian Democrats. Polk was persuaded by the State Democratic elite to return to Tennessee from his seat in Congress, and run for Governor in 1838, against the incumbent Whig, Newton Cannon. Polk won the election, and was inaugurated on October 14, 1839. The State Legislature was also controlled by the Democrats, and it proceeded to oust the Whig-elected U.S. Senators from Tennessee, Hugh Lawson White and Ephraim H. Foster.

The chief issues in the State at the beginning of Governor Polk's administration were: 1) problems with specie payments to State banks; 2) investment in State internal improvements, such as railroads, turnpikes, and navigable rivers; 3) the support and encouragement of common schools; 4) reforms of the State Lunatic Hospital; 5) reform in the laws in electing Presidential electors; and 6) movements to restrict tippling houses in the State. On the national scene, the question of slavery and the slave trade was becoming even more divisive, as shown by the number of resolutions from state legislatures sent to the Tennessee General Assembly for consideration. The national boundary between Canada and the State of Maine was also a problem, as well as the tariff issue.

Governor Polk's administrative papers provided useful information in the research of the State's legislative action to deal with the issues as stated above. Of particular interest is the number of resolutions sent by governors and other state legislatures involving various problems in the federal system. There are many correspondences relating to the several internal improvements' companies within the State, charged with creating and maintaining turnpikes and railroads. Also of interest is a very detailed letterbook, maintained by Governor Polk, of his outgoing correspondences during his term.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

James Knox Polk

- 1795 November 2, born in Mecklenberg County, North Carolina- the eldest of ten children.
- 1806 Moved to Maury County, Tennessee with his family.
- 1818 Graduated with honors from the University of North Carolina; returned to Nashville to study law under Felix Grundy.
- 1820 Admitted to the Bar; began his law practice in Columbia.
- 1823 Elected to the Tennessee State Legislature, representing Maury County.
- 1824 January 4, married Sarah Childress of Murfreesboro, Tennessee.
- 1825 Elected to the United States Congress; served until 1839, and during this period served two terms as Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- 1839 Returned to Tennessee at the request of Andrew Jackson and other Tennessee Democrats to become a candidate for Governor of Tennessee; defeated the incumbent Governor, Newton Cannon (Whig).
- 1841 & 1843 Twice defeated by James C. Jones (Whig) in gubernatorial races.
- 1844 Nominated by the Democratic Party as their candidate for President of the United States, and elected as the first “dark horse” candidate. Achieved all his stated goals for his administration, including the annexation of Texas and the opening of public lands for settlement. Served one term in the White House at his insistence.
- 1849 Returned to Nashville only to die shortly thereafter of an illness on June 15. Buried first at his home “Polk Place”, and later he and his wife were re-interred on Capital Hill.

CONTAINER LIST

Box Number 1

Folder No.

Subject and Date

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Correspondence (Incoming); 1839 |
| 2 | Correspondence (Incoming); Jan.-June, 1840 |
| 3 | Correspondence (Incoming); July-December, 1840 |
| 4 | Correspondence (Incoming); Jan.-May, 1841 |
| 5 | Correspondence (Incoming); June-October, 1841 |
| 6 | Correspondence (Outgoing); 1839 |
| 7 | Correspondence (Outgoing); 1840 |
| 8 | Correspondence (Outgoing); 1841 |
| 9 | Miscellaneous Correspondences, 1839-1841. |

Box Number 2

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| 1 | Miscellaneous materials, 1839 |
| 2 | Miscellaneous materials, 1840 |
| 3 | Miscellaneous materials, 1841 |
| 4 | Tax and license reports by counties, 1839-1841. |
| 5 | Special subject: Minority report of the
Committee on Tippling houses. |
| 6 | Printed material: Legislative report on
Northeastern boundary of the United States of
America, 1841. |

Box Number 3

Folder No.

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| 1-34 | Petitions for pardons, 1839-1840 |
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Box Number 4

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| 1-32 | Petitions for pardons, 1841 |
| 33 | Applications for rewards, 1839-1841 |

Box Number 5
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Subject and Date

Polk Administration letterbook, 1839-1841.
Polk Administration letterbook, 1841.
Pardon record book, 1840-1845 (includes
Administration of Gov. James C. Jones).

NAME INDEX

Box 1, Folder 1, 1839

Bagley, A.P., Governor of Alabama (3).
Bledsoe County, citizens of [Petition]
Boggs, Lilburn W., Governor of Missouri.
Bullock, J.M., Secretary of State, State of Kentucky.
Caruthers, A.G., Judge, 4th Judicial Circuit (2).
Cooke, Bates, Comptroller, State of New York.
French, R.B., asst. Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives (2).
Gibbs, G.M., Chancellor, Western Division, Tennessee.
Green, Nathan, et al. , Justice, Tennessee Supreme Court (3).
Garrett, W., City Recorder, City of Nashville, Tennessee.
Lauderdale, James, Sheriff of Bradley County, Tennessee.
McDonald, Charles J., Governor of Georgia.
Meigs, R.J., State Librarian, State of Tennessee.
Palmer, Aaron H., Office of American and Foreign Agency, New York (2).
Pillow, Gideon J., president, Columbia Central Turnpike Company (2).
Poinsett, J.R., United States Secretary of War, Washington, D.C.
Talcott, G., Lt. Col., Ordinance Dept., Washington, D.C.
Trabue, C.C., Mayor, City of Nashville, Tennessee.
Wallace, David, Governor of Indiana.
Wilson, J.W., Coroner of Bradley County, Tennessee.

Box 1, Folder 2, Jan.-June. 1840

Adams, George W., cashier, LaGrange & Memphis Railroad Company.
Alexander, E., Attorney-General, State of Tennessee.
Barry, Valentine D., Judge, 11th Circuit Court.
Bostick, John, State Director, Nolensville Turnpike Company.
Bryan, William P., Colonel, Nashville Blue (4).
Cannon, Newton, former Governor of Tennessee.
Clarkson, Thomas, president, Convention of Friends of the Negro-British & Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (2).
Conner, Cornelius, Director, Union Bank of Tennessee.
Cox, John W., Sheriff of Powell County, Tennessee.
Crozier, Arthur, et al. , board member, Hiawassee Railroad Company.
Dickins, Asbury, Secretary of the United States Senate, Washington D.C.
Fairfield, John, Governor of Maine.
Green, Nathan, et al. , Justice, Tennessee Supreme Court (2).
Hinman, Royal N., Secretary of State, State of Connecticut (2).
Knapp, C.L., Secretary of State, State of Vermont.
Morris, Eastin, president, LaGrange & Memphis Railroad Company (4).

Noble, Patrick, Governor of South Carolina.
Pennington, William, Governor of New Jersey.

Box 1, Folder 2, Jan.-June, 1840

Pillow, Gideon J., president, Columbia Central Turnpike Company (4).
Read, John, Judge, 10th Circuit Court.
Seward, William H., Governor of New York.
Spence, Marmon, secretary, Nashville, Murfreesboro, and Shelbyville Turnpike Company.
Talcott, G., Lt. Col., Ordinance Dept., Washington D.C.
Wallace, David, Governor of Indiana.
Weakley, Benjamin F., Director, Nolensville Turnpike Company.
Wickliffe, Charles A., Governor of Kentucky.
Wilson County, citizens of [Petition]
Woodbury, Levi, United States Secretary of the Treasury, Washington, D.C.

Box 1, Folder 3, July-December, 1840

Addison, H., et al. , Georgetown, District of Columbia.
Akins, Nathan B., Commandant, 142nd. Regiment, Tennessee Militia.
Bagley, A.P., Governor of Alabama (2).
Chitwood, L.C., Colonel, 143rd. Regiment, Tennessee Militia.
Coupur, James, secretary, New Castle Manufacturing Company, New Castle, Del.
Davis, E.S., State Director, LaGrange & Memphis Railroad Company.
Dickinson, David W., Presidential elector, State of Tennessee.
Dunlap, William C., Judge, 11th Circuit Court.
Forsyth, John, United States Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.
Foster, Ephraim, et al. , Presidential electors, State of Tennessee (2).
Fugate, Johoyle, Colonel, 17th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.
Gilmer, Thomas W., Governor of Virginia (2).
Green, Nathan, et al. ; Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court (4).
Hamilton, W.F., Colonel, 54th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.
Harvill, John, Sheriff of Henderson County, Tennessee.
Henderson County, citizens of [Petition].
Jacobs, Solomon D., president, Hiawassee Railroad Company.
Jennison, Silas H., Governor of Vermont.
Jones, George W., State Senator representing Lincoln, Giles Counties, Tenn.
Jones, W., Washington City, District of Columbia.
McLean, Cornelius, Secretary of State, State of Maryland.
McNeil, William, State Director, Union Bank of Tennessee.
Meeks, John N., Colonel, 108th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.
Minor, James L., Secretary of State, State of Missouri.
Morris, Eastin, president, LaGrange & Memphis Railroad Company (4).

Pillow, Gideon J., president, Columbia Central Turnpike Company (3).
Ramsey, J.G.M., president, Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroad Co.
Reagan, James H., Colonel, 31st Regiment, Tennessee Militia.
Roberson, Isaac, Colonel, 36th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.

Box 1, Folder 3, July-December, 1840

Rose, James, president, South Western Railroad Company, Charleston, S.C.
Sanders, R.L., Colonel, 87th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.
Shunk, F.R., Secretary of State, State of Pennsylvania.
Spencer, J.C., Secretary of State, State of New York.
Talbot, Joseph H., Attorney General, 10th Solicitor District.
Warner, William N., Director, LaGrange & Memphis Railroads Company.

Box 1, Folder 4, Jan.-May, 1841

Bagley, A.P., Governor of Alabama.
Beavers, William H., president, Chambers & Purdy Turnpike Company (2).
Bigger, Samuel, Governor of Indiana (3).
Blackman, H., president, Nolensville Turnpike Company.
Bigelow, John P., Secretary of the Commonwealth, State of Massachusetts (4).
Butler, James R., keeper of militia stores, Allegheny Arsenal, Pittsburg, PA.
Caldwell, R.D., Colonel, 114th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.
Callon, F.W., Colonel, 34th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.
Caswell, William R., aide-de-camp to Maj. Gen. Brazelton, 1st Division.
Chambers & Purdy Turnpike Company, State Directors [Petition].
Coffey, A.M., secretary, Hiawassee Railroad Company.
Gadsen, James, president, Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleston Railroads Co.
Garnett, Will, Secretary of State, State of Alabama.
Goodner, James, secretary, Lebanon & Sparta Turnpike Company.
Grason, William, Governor of Maryland.
Green, Nathan, et al. ; Justice, Tennessee Supreme Court (2).
Hearn, John, president, Lebanon & Sparta Turnpike Company.
Houston, John W., Secretary of State, State of Delaware (2).
Jacobs, S.D., et al. ; Hiawassee Railroad Company (3).
Kent, Edward, Governor of Maine (2).
King, Samuel Ward, Governor of Rhode Island.
Lake, Joseph S., et al. ; Commissioners of the Ohio Canal Fund.
Lenior, William B., commissioner, Hiawassee Railroad Company.
Letcher, Robert P., Governor of Kentucky.
Lyon, William, commissioner, Hiawassee Railroad Company.
McNutt, Alexander G., Governor of Mississippi (3).
Morris, Eastin, president, LaGrange & Memphis Railroad Company.
Pillow, Gideon J., president, Columbia Central Turnpike Company (2).

Porter, David R., Governor of Pennsylvania.
Ragan, Daniel, chief store keeper, St. Louis Arsenal.
Scott, Edward, Judge, 2nd Circuit Court.
Seward, William H., Governor of New York (2).
Talbot, Joseph H., Attorney General, 10th Circuit.

Box 1, Folder 5, June-October, 1841

Bell, John, United States Secretary of War, Washington, D.C.
Bomford, G., Colonel, Ordinance Office, Washington, D.C.
Caruthers, A.B., special Judge, 4th Circuit Court.
Childress, William G., director, Union Bank of Tennessee.
Cleage, David, director-designate, Hiawassee Railroad Company.
Cooke, William H., board member, Hiawassee Railroad Company.
Hinman, Royal N., Secretary of State, State of Connecticut (2).
Hiawassee Railroad Company, board members [Petition].
King, Samuel W., Governor of Rhode Island.
McCarty, John L., director, Hiawassee Railroad Company.
Maclin, Lackfield, acting director, LaGrange & Memphis Railroad Company.
Parshall, J., board member, Hiawassee Railroad Company.
Ramsey, J.G.M., agent, Louisville, Cincinnati, and Charleton Railroad Co. (3)
Sommerville, Jno., board member, Union Bank of Tennessee.
Stockholm, D.B., New York State Agricultural Society, Ithaca, N.Y.
Trezvant, James, acting director, LaGrange & Memphis Railroad Company.

Box 1, Folder 6, Outgoing Correspondence, 1839

Anderson, H.I., agent and keeper of the Penitentiary.
Barksdale, Thomas W., secretary, Clarksville & Russellville Turnpike Company.
Clarksville & Russellville Turnpike Company, president & board members-
Douglass, R.G., secretary, Gallatin & Cumberland Turnpike Company (2).
Nashville & Charlotte Turnpike Company, president & board of directors-
Pillow, Gideon J., president, Columbia Central Turnpike Company.
Poinsett, J.R., United States Secretary of War, Washington, D.C.
Smith, F.R., secretary, Big Hatchie Turnpike Company.
Trabue, C.C., mayor, City of Nashville, Tennessee.
Wylie, George A., secretary, Nashville & Kentucky Turnpike Company.

Box 1, Folder 7, Outgoing Correspondence, 1840

Gallatin Turnpike Company, president and directors-
Gentlemen of the Senate and the House of Representatives-(2)
Nashville & Charlotte Turnpike Company, president and directors-
Pillow, Gideon J., president, Columbia Central Turnpike Company.
Speakers of the Senate and of the House of Representatives-
Young, Daniel (warrant for apprehension).

Box 1, Folder 8, Outgoing Correspondence, 1841

Bagley, A.P., Governor of Alabama.

Bend, Mark; of Sevier County, commission as 1st Lieut., 19th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.

Compton, Jno. S., of Sevier County, commission as Captain, 19th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.

Gates, S.M., United States Congressman, State of New York.

Gentleman of the Senate and of the House of Representatives-

Howard, Madison; of Sevier County, commission as 1st Lieut., 19th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.

Layruan, Asa; of Sevier County, commission as Captain, 19th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.

Shields, J.W.; of Sevier County, commission as 1st Lieut., 19th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.

White, James M.; of Maury County, commission as Captain, 78th Regiment, Tennessee Militia.

Wynne, A.R., Castalian Springs, Sumner County, Tennessee.

Box 1, Folder 9, Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1839-1841

Bradford, James F., commissioner, McMinn County, Tennessee.

Cannon, N., et al. ; Whig Party of Tennessee.

Douglass, Burchett, lawyer, 11th Judicial Circuit.

Eastman, E.G., printer, Acts of Tennessee.

Houston, Russell, lawyer, Columbia, Tennessee.

McEwen, Robert H., Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Tennessee (2).

Manford, James E., lawyer, Randolph (TN?), 11th Judicial Circuit.

Read, John, judge, 10th Judicial Circuit.

Ruffin, James F., et al. ; members of the Bar, 11th Judicial Circuit [Petition].

Sommerville, Jno., cashier, Union Bank of Tennessee.

Spence, M., treasurer, Nashville, Murfreesboro, and Shelbyville Turnpike Co.

Talbot, Joseph H., Attorney General, 10th Judicial Circuit.

Whiteside, Thomas Co., Attorney General, unknown district.

Wormsley, Hugh W., lawyer, Henderson County, Tennessee.

Selected Miscellaneous Material

American and Foreign Agency, circulars, 1839 (2). B2-f1

Petition- citizens of Berlin, Tenn. asking for retailing of spirits in quantities up to one gallon, 1839. B2-f1.

Receipt- to Sheriff of Jackson County, 1839. B2-f1

Resolution- Board of Trustees, Hampden Sidney Academy, Knox County, 1839. B2-f1

Resolution- General Assembly, awaiting Governor-Elect Polk for his inauguration, 1839. B2-f1

Bond- Captain M.G. Lewis, 78th Regiment, Tennessee Militia, for arms, 1840. B2-f2
Correspondence- Luke Lea, entry taker, Ocoee District to Robert P. Currin,
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1840. B2-f2
Relinquishment- Mount Cumberland Academy, Jamestown, Tennessee, 1840. B2-f2
Report- State Comptroller's Office, relative to the common school fund, 1840. B2-f2
Affidavit- Jno. M. Bass, Justice of the Peace for Davidson County, Tennessee,
relative to case of State v. Hiram Baker, 1841. B2-f3
Circular- Governor A.G. McNutt of Mississippi, relative to the interest on Union Bank
bonds, 1841. B2-f3
Petition- to recover back pay from the U.S. Army by widow and administrators of
estate of Armistead Flippen, of Smith County, Tennessee- a Revolutionary
War soldier who died in combat, 1841. B2-f3
Receipt- R.P. Currin, Superintendent of Public Instruction, relating to the issuance of
performance bonds, 1841. B2-f3
Receipt- Thomas K. Porter, for deposit into common school fund, 1841. B2-f3
Report- R.P. Currin, Superintendent of Public Instruction, submitted to the Tennessee
General Assembly, 1841. B2-f3
Report- Fayette County Court, enumeration of male inhabitants of county, 1841. B2-f3
Statement- account of Robert B. Currey, treasurer of State Lunatic Hospital, 1841 B2-f3

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